



## News Release

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### **Utah's Uninsured Rate Dips**

*Still, nearly 290,000 Utahns have no health insurance*

SALT LAKE CITY – New estimates released today by the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) show slight drops in both the number and percentage of Utahns who were uninsured during 2007. The Utah Healthcare Access Survey (UHAS) shows a decrease from 11.9 percent of Utahns who were uninsured in 2006 to 10.6 percent in 2007. The decrease is the first measured decline since the current method of calculating insurance coverage began in 2001.

The survey estimates 287,200 Utahns lacked health care coverage during calendar year 2007, a decrease of 19,000 from the previous year (306,000 in 2006). The drop occurred in many demographic categories, including children under 18 (7.8 percent decrease) and adults 18 and older (7.2 percent decrease). The most likely factor contributing to the drop in uninsured during 2007 was the state's strong economy.

“There is ample evidence that those with health insurance are in better health, and I'm encouraged that we're moving in the right direction,” said UDOH Executive Director, Dr. David Sundwall. “However, we still have a lot of work to do to make it possible for all Utahns to have health insurance.”

Governor Jon Huntsman today signed several bills to address the problem, including HB 133, a measure that creates a legislative task force to develop and implement further changes to the healthcare system, and HB 326, which allows the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to remain open for enrollment indefinitely.

Over the last decade, Utah's uninsured population grew at an average annual rate of 6.9 percent, three times the rate of the state's overall population growth of 2.3 percent. Of the state's 287,200

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uninsured, more than 85,000 are residents whose incomes fall below the federal poverty level (FPL), more than 100,000 are employed full-time and more than 53,000 are self-employed.

The survey also found that:

- 35 percent of adults below 150 percent of FPL were uninsured
- 34 percent of Hispanics/Latinos were uninsured
- 31 percent of adults without a high school diploma were uninsured
- 23 percent of self-employed Utahns were uninsured
- 18 percent of Utahns between the ages of 18 and 34 were uninsured

According to UHAS estimates, nearly 4 out of 5 Utahns (79.5 percent) who were insured in 2007 had coverage through a current or former employer or union. Although that was up slightly from 2006 (78.7 percent), the percent of uninsured who report their employer does not offer coverage rose from 33.5 to 37.9 percent over the same period.

The UHAS is an annual, statewide household survey that measures health insurance status and health care access. It is representative of the Utah population living in households with telephones.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health by preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*